

Army National Guard Brigade Combat Teams: Future Structure and Roles

by

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United States Army War College
Class of 2012

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 12-04-2012		2. REPORT TYPE Civilian Research Paper		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Army National Guard Brigade Combat Teams: Future Structure and Roles				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) LTC Stephen M. Radulski				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Scowcroft Institute of International Affairs Bush School of Government and Public Service Texas A&M University 4220 TAMU College Station, TX 77843-4220				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College 122 Forbes Ave. Carlisle, PA 17013				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT DISTRIBUTION A: UNLIMITED					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT Over the last decade the Army National Guard witnessed a dramatic transition from being an occasionally employed strategic reserve to becoming part of the Operational Force. The ARNG's 28 Brigade Combat Teams have achieved a level of readiness and compatibility with the Active Component not previously seen. As the demand for forces decreases due to reduced contingency operations overseas and budgetary concerns continue, the ARNG will have to clarify the most appropriate future structure, roles and missions for its combat brigades. This paper suggests a framework to ensure ARNG BCTs remain ready and capable to provide both the strategic depth and operational forces to meet the Army's needs in the 21 st Century.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Operational Reserve, ARFORGEN, Strategic Depth, Stability Operations, Strategic Reserve, Regional Alignment					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	b. ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	c. THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)
			UNLIMITED	32	

USAWC CIVILIAN RESEARCH PROJECT

**ARMY NATIONAL GUARD BRIGADE COMBAT TEAMS:
FUTURE STRUCTURE AND ROLES**

by

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Lieutenant Colonel Stephen M. Radulski

TITLE: Army National Guard Brigade Combat Teams: Future Structure and Roles

FORMAT: Civilian Research Project

DATE: 12 April 2012 **WORD COUNT:** 5,743 **PAGES:** 32

KEY TERMS: Operational Reserve, ARFORGEN, Strategic Depth, Stability Operations, Strategic Reserve, Regional Alignment

CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

Over the last decade the Army National Guard (ARNG) witnessed a dramatic transition from being an occasionally employed strategic reserve to becoming part of the Operational Force. The ARNG's 28 Brigade Combat Teams have achieved a level of readiness and compatibility with the Active Component not previously seen. As the demand for forces decreases due to reduced contingency operations overseas and budgetary concerns continue, the ARNG will have to clarify the most appropriate future structure, roles and missions for its combat brigades. This paper suggests a framework to ensure ARNG BCTs remain ready and capable to provide both the strategic depth and operational forces to meet the Army's needs in the 21st Century.

ARMY NATIONAL GUARD BRIGADE COMBAT TEAMS: FUTURE STRUCTURE AND ROLES

The Army National Guard's (ARNG) contributions to the nation's defense since 2001 increased significantly as it provided forces to support wide-ranging demands and to reduce the stress on the Active Component. The ARNG transformed from being primarily a strategic reserve to becoming part of the operational force, with its Brigade Combat Teams (BCT) deployed worldwide. As the demand for deployed forces declines and budget concerns continue, the ARNG must clarify the most appropriate structure and missions for its 28 BCTs. The nation must sustain the ARNG combat brigades' high levels of readiness to ensure they can provide the strategic depth and operational flexibility needed for the 21st Century security environment.

The ARNG's BCT's most likely future operational missions in response to foreign conflicts will be to provide follow-on forces to the AC to ensure defeat of an aggressor nation or to conduct post-conflict stability operations as seen over the last decade. Their most likely future peacetime missions will center on providing forces for both international stabilization activities and domestic defense support to civil authorities (DSCA) - the traditional civil support to local and state governments in response to disasters. The capabilities of the ARNG's BCTs must be available across the range of military operations during times of peace and war.

To provide a source of strategic depth the seven ARNG Heavy BCTs should be designated as a strategic surge force with training focused on major combat operations and combined arms maneuver. To meet the routine operational needs of the Army, twelve of the 21 infantry-centric BCTs (20 Infantry BCTs and 1 Stryker BCT) should be

aligned with Army forces in either the Asia-Pacific or Middle East regions. The remaining nine infantry BCTs would be aligned with Europe, Africa or Central and South America. All 28 ARNG BCTs must continue to cycle through the force generation process to avoid a return to the low readiness levels characteristic of the 20th Century.

This paper will review the ARNG combat brigades' contributions and challenges as the nation's primary reserve over the past 30 years. It will then examine viewpoints related to the most appropriate structure, roles and missions for the ARNG as the nation divests itself of the past decade's intense operational commitments. Finally, the paper will propose recommendations regarding how best to orient the ARNG's BCTs to ensure that they are ready and available to contribute to the nation's future defense needs.

ARNG combat brigade readiness

In 1973, the Army implemented the Total Force Policy in response to the end of conscription, post-war force reductions and defense budget cuts. The Total Force Policy required greater reliance on the Reserve Component (RC) to support any significant wartime needs through its provision of combat and support units to the Active Component (AC).¹ The Army increased the number of AC divisions but did not authorize a third combat brigade due to a cap on the Active Army end strength. In response the Army adopted the "Roundout" program to align several ARNG combat brigades with AC divisions. If full mobilization in response to a major contingency occurred, the ARNG brigades were to fall under command of the AC divisions.² The Army sought to provide a cost-effective method of manning the divisions and enable AC division training oversight of the ARNG brigades.³

The Reserve Component contribution to *Operation Desert Storm* marked the first test of the Total Force Policy. Operations proved the necessity of deploying the RC as an integral part of combat operations.⁴ While ARNG support and logistics units contributed to the Army's efforts, none of the ARNG Roundout brigades deployed to Southwest Asia. The initial short mobilization window of up to 180 days did not allow enough time for the brigades to be mobilized, trained for 90 days and then deployed.⁵ Three combat brigades did eventually mobilize and conduct pre-deployment training. Several factors contributed to their remaining in the United States. Concerns about the brigades' combat mission proficiencies and their leaders' capabilities resulted in additional unanticipated training. *Operation Desert Storm* ended by the time the Army deemed the brigades ready for deployment. This represented the "the first time in history that America fought a ground war without a single ground maneuver unit from the Guard."⁶

The Army abandoned the Roundout program due to the experiences of *Operation Desert Storm*. Instead the 1993 Bottom Up Review tasked the ARNG to provide a strategic reserve force of 15 light infantry and armored enhanced Separate Brigades (eSB). The Army gave the eSBs higher peacetime priority for equipment and training resources than the remainder of the ARNG divisions and brigades, although only allocating 39 days training per year.⁷ The eSB's were the "nation's principal reserve ground combat force" with a goal of deploying within 90 days of mobilization.⁸

The ARNG eSBs faced readiness challenges similar to those that the Roundout brigades experienced. A 2000 General Accounting Office study⁹ found that the eSBs could not meet the platoon level maneuver and gunnery readiness goals. The study

cited two primary reasons for the lack of training readiness: cuts to the full time support staff that coordinate training, administration and logistics; and lack of time available to conduct all the required training to standard.¹⁰ Each eSB trained on a wide ranging number of mission essential maneuver and gunnery tasks, failing to achieve proficiency in many of them. The eSBs also began rotations to support peacekeeping operations in the Balkans in the 1990s that detracted from their training readiness for their primary wartime missions. The increasing amount of potential missions that the Army envisioned for the eSBs led to confusion about where their training priorities lay.

The ARNG Response to the Nation's Efforts in the 21st Century

After the September 11th attacks, the ARNG found itself increasingly called upon to provide operational forces. This marked a dramatic shift from the *Operation Desert Storm* model of a short deployment period and from the 1990s tradition of occasional and mainly voluntary mobilizations. Since 2001 approximately 480,000 ARNG soldier mobilizations occurred to support Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan), Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn.¹¹ ARNG BCTs or their subordinate elements deployed to support missions ranging from security force assistance training to larger scale stability and combat operations.

Two continuing and unique small scale efforts to support the National Guard's global engagement mission are ARNG participation in Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams (OMLT) and the Agribusiness Development Teams (ADT). The OMLTs are international advisory teams deployed to Afghanistan to partner with Afghan National Security Forces. Small teams of ARNG soldiers supplemented their European State Partnership Program¹² partner nation (such as Hungary, Croatia and Lithuania) charged

with supporting NATO's International Security Force Assistance (ISAF) operations.¹³

The ADTs brought NG soldiers with experience in agriculture to Afghanistan to work in concert with Provincial Reconstruction Teams, the U.S. Departments of State and Agriculture, the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Afghan government. These small teams of about 70 soldiers work to improve the agricultural output among Afghan farmers. Over 16 U.S. states contributed National Guard personnel for this program since 2007 and NGB is committed to supporting the effort through at least 2013.¹⁴

ARNG deployments in support of already established peacekeeping operations also increased to ease the pressure on the AC. ARNG divisions and combat brigades provided headquarters and ground force elements that worked in conjunction with AC units for operations in support of *Operation Joint Forge* in Bosnia from 2000 to 2005. ARNG contributions since 1999 to support *Operation Joint Guardian* operations in Kosovo similarly called on several states to provide forces.¹⁵ Several of the ARNG's sixteen Maneuver Enhancement Brigades deployed to lead a multinational battle group in support of NATO operations. ARNG BCTs also provided various sized elements for operations in the Sinai, Horn of Africa, Central America and the Caribbean.

ARNG BCTs balanced their overseas deployments with their responsibilities to the state governors in providing mission command systems and security elements in response to both manmade and natural disasters. The ARNG role in Defense Support to Civil Authorities (DSCA) and Homeland Defense missions increased dramatically in the last several years with the creation of specific National Guard based units and

capabilities to enhance Department of Defense (DoD) consequence management response.

The ARNG's contributions to the nation's defense over the last decade combined with the 21st Century's anticipated threats will surely influence the ARNG's BCTs use in the future.

The Future Security Environment

Perhaps at the heart of the attempt to anticipate the future security environment is that there is not simply one great existential threat to the United States as was the case during the Cold War. Instead the United States faces the possibility of multiple threats that could eventually lead to serious consequences if not handled in a manner that ameliorates a potential crisis or eliminates the threat.

The 2010 *Army Operating Concept* characterized the future operational environment as "complex and uncertain, marked by rapid change and a wide range of threats"¹⁶ that will necessitate continued involvement by the U.S. military. The United States will face challenges from terrorism and insurgencies, potential regional nuclear powers in North Korea and Iran and competition in Asia due to the expanding influence of China.¹⁷

The instability in close to half of the world's nations may require intervention by the United States in order to strengthen foreign governments and reduce conflict.¹⁸ Half of the world's population lives in weak or failing states.¹⁹ The trends of globalization, environmental stress, ready access to technology and the increase in the number and size of cities due to migration, a growing youth population and urbanization will typify an environment conducive to conflict.²⁰ Chief of Staff of the Army General George W.

Casey Jr. foresaw the future decades typified by persistent conflict where the “two trends of greatest concern are proliferation (of weapons of mass destruction) and failing states.”²¹ The United States will likely face “hybrid threats” utilizing a variety of tactics “employed asymmetrically to counter our advantages.”²² The potential role of the ARNG in contributing to the nation’s efforts in addressing future security challenges will need to be defined.

Alternative Visions of the Future ARNG Structure

The increased use of the RC during the last ten years prompted growing scrutiny into its future structure as an operational or strategic reserve force. Further anticipated AC force cuts and the need to sustain the Army’s involvement around the globe have prompted the call to reframe the perspective of the RC as being solely a strategic reserve.

The 2008 Commission on the National Guard and Reserves (CGNR) report, *Transforming the National Guard and Reserves into a 21st-Century Operational Force* called for restructuring the Reserve Component into an Operational Reserve Force (ORF) and a Strategic Reserve Force (SRF).²³ As the demand for Reserve Component forces overseas declined, the Strategic Reserve Force would emerge to house units that would train at readiness levels facilitating activation in times of major conflict by training for no less than the required 39 days per year.²⁴ The ORF would provide forces for periodic rotational deployments and be the first RC units mobilized in case of a national emergency. Soldiers could transfer between the two different forces dependent upon their desire for more routine deployment. The Reserve Officers Association²⁵ recommended creating Strategic Reserve Units trained for 39 days per year prepared

for mobilization in case of major conflict and ready to provide consequence management support to state officials. The Operational Reserve Units would train for 60 (rather than 39) days per year to prepare it for early deployment to support specific active component units.

Various proposals recommended creating a distinct homeland defense force as well. Colonels David Smith and Randy Pullen envisioned that Operational Reserve Units would be deployed once every five years as part of the force generation process, with assigned soldiers receiving better benefits than those in the Strategic Reserve Units.²⁶ A separate Homeland Security Reserve would enable a clearer focus on that mission in support of homeland defense and consequence management response.

Frank Hoffman recommended a similar division of mission focus by retaining a core of up to fifteen ARNG brigades for conventional warfare, four United States Army Reserve-based stability operations focused brigades and the creation of 12 ARNG based Security Enhancement Brigades to meet homeland defense needs.²⁷ In some respects, DoD and the ARNG met the call for separate Homeland defense brigades through the creation of the 10 National Guard based Homeland Response Force (HRF) since 2010. The HRFs are each aligned with one of the ten Federal Emergency Management Agency's regions, providing forces capable of rapidly responding to chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and high yield explosive (CBRNE) incidents.²⁸

The creation of some type of strategic reserve may be feasible in some respects given the anticipated budget challenges the nation currently faces. However, expecting only the minimum required training days per year would certainly mean the reversion of any "purely strategic" reserve to Cold War levels of low readiness. In addition,

differences in benefits, bonuses or pay beyond those traditionally granted mobilized RC soldiers would be politically infeasible and create a schism within the ARNG.

Defining the Operational Force

Support for the creation of an operational reserve force grew while calls to create a distinct strategic reserve force trained at low readiness levels appears to have been put aside. In October 2008 the Department of Defense issued Directive 1200.17 to “promote and support the management of the Reserve Components (RC) as an operational force”²⁹ in response to the CNGR report. It defined the RC as a force able to:

provide operational capabilities and strategic depth to meet U.S. defense requirements across the full spectrum of conflict. In their operational roles, RCs participate in a full range of missions according to their Services’ force generation plans...In their strategic roles, RC units and individuals train or are available for missions in accordance with the national defense strategy.³⁰

Two separate government sponsored studies in 2010 and 2011 envisioned the ARNG being available as part of the operational force.³¹ The RC can expect to regularly provide operational forces “while ensuring strategic depth in the event of mid to large-scale contingencies or other unanticipated national crises when they are not being deployed.”³² Both reports recommended eliminating the use of the terms operational reserve and strategic reserve as they relate to the Reserve Component. The 2010 *Independent Panel Review of the Reserve Component in an Era of Persistent Conflict*, commonly referred to as the *Reimer Report*, rationalized that every operational AC and RC unit not deployed or slated for deployment under the force generation process collectively constituted the nation’s strategic reserve.³³ The National Guard Bureau stated that the entire RC should be viewed as part of the Operational Force, defined as

“all military...(units) regardless of component, within a service’s force generation model that provide operational capacity in support of Combatant Commander requirements.”³⁴

Beyond the operational capabilities that the RC possesses, it can also represent a viable cost savings for the nation. When deployments are infrequent and the RC is maintained mainly for strategic depth, capacity is maintained in the RC at a lower cost.³⁵ The *Reimer Report* noted that the cost to sustain a deployed RC soldier is about the same or slightly less than his AC counterpart and only 25-33% of an AC soldier when not deployed.³⁶ Sustaining the RC as an operational force will permit the nation to continue meeting its security obligations worldwide without having to increase the size of the AC.

The ARNG contributions over the past decade built capabilities and experience amongst its leaders and soldiers and increased trust between it and the AC. The transition of the ARNG into an operational force presented some challenges. ARNG units deployed more often than the templated force generation process called for, creating stress on the force. The ARNG BCT training over the past decade focused primarily on counterinsurgency and stability operations, with time to train for little else.³⁷ RC units were “assigned missions for which they were not originally intended or adequately resourced”³⁸ and suffered a lack of unit cohesion due to cross-leveling of personnel and equipment. These factors resulted in “the detriment of preparedness for the full range of military missions,”³⁹ for reserve component forces.

Defining Future Roles and Missions of the Reserve Component

The emphasis on maintaining the RC as an operational force is certainly due to the capabilities and skill sets it possesses. The nation’s significant financial and training

investment in the ARNG in the last decade increased its' units' readiness and compatibility with the Active Component.⁴⁰ The ARNG will expect its BCTs to execute missions across the range of military operations.

Several studies conducted recently point to the ARNG's future involvement in stability operations (whether pre- or post-conflict) due to its members' skill sets and the contributions of its units in Iraq and Afghanistan. John Nagl and Travis Sharp⁴¹ argued that the Reserve Component's experiences of the last decade and the capabilities that the RC possesses are relevant to the future needs of the Department of Defense in a time of persistent conflict. As part of deterring conflict, the authors envisioned RC participation in peacekeeping operations, security force assistance efforts, and supporting U.S. efforts to strengthen overseas governance.⁴²

The Department of Defense released the *Comprehensive Review of the Future Role of the Reserve Component* in April, 2011 to clarify the appropriate roles and missions that would enable the RC to support the National Military Strategy in the 21st Century.⁴³ After analyzing a number of classified DoD planning scenarios, the *Comprehensive Review* emphasized that the RC is most likely to be utilized as part of DoD's efforts that are "predictable, relatively consistent over time, and can be substantially enabled by long-term personal and geographic relationships."⁴⁴ As such, ARNG BCTs may be called upon to support a Combatant Commander's Theater Security Cooperation efforts or contribute to large-scale, long term stability operations such as seen in Iraq and Afghanistan. Although the AC will provide the density of forces in the initial phases of any large-scale conventional campaign, ARNG BCTs will provide reinforcement as required.⁴⁵

Nathan Freier's CSIS report *U.S. Ground Force Capabilities through 2020*⁴⁶ identified 14 different types of operations that the U.S. Army and Marine Corps might conduct in the future security environment. Freier anticipated the projected scale, duration, threat conditions, and likelihood of future occurrence to identify the appropriate level of force needed to execute each operation. Freier anticipates that the AC will provide the forces necessary to respond to short duration (lasting from days to a few months) and most smaller scale (less than five BCTs) operations. Using these two criteria leaves five types of operations for which the ARNG BCTs might provide forces.

Security force assistance and peacekeeping operations may be of long duration. A shift of responsibility from the AC to the RC may occur with these operations akin to what occurred in the Balkans and in the Sinai over the last 15 years. ARNG BCTs may also provide forces for opposed stabilization missions and major combat campaigns simply due to the numbers of BCTs needed. Additionally, although the report focused on foreign operations, ARNG BCTs will continue to support to local and state governments for Consequence Management (CM) or defense support to civil authorities (DSCA) and homeland defense (HLD) missions. Figure 1 represents the types of operations in which ARNG BCTs may contribute forces due to either scale or duration of each operation. The gray shaded areas represent the demand based upon either the duration of or the forces needed for each type of operation.

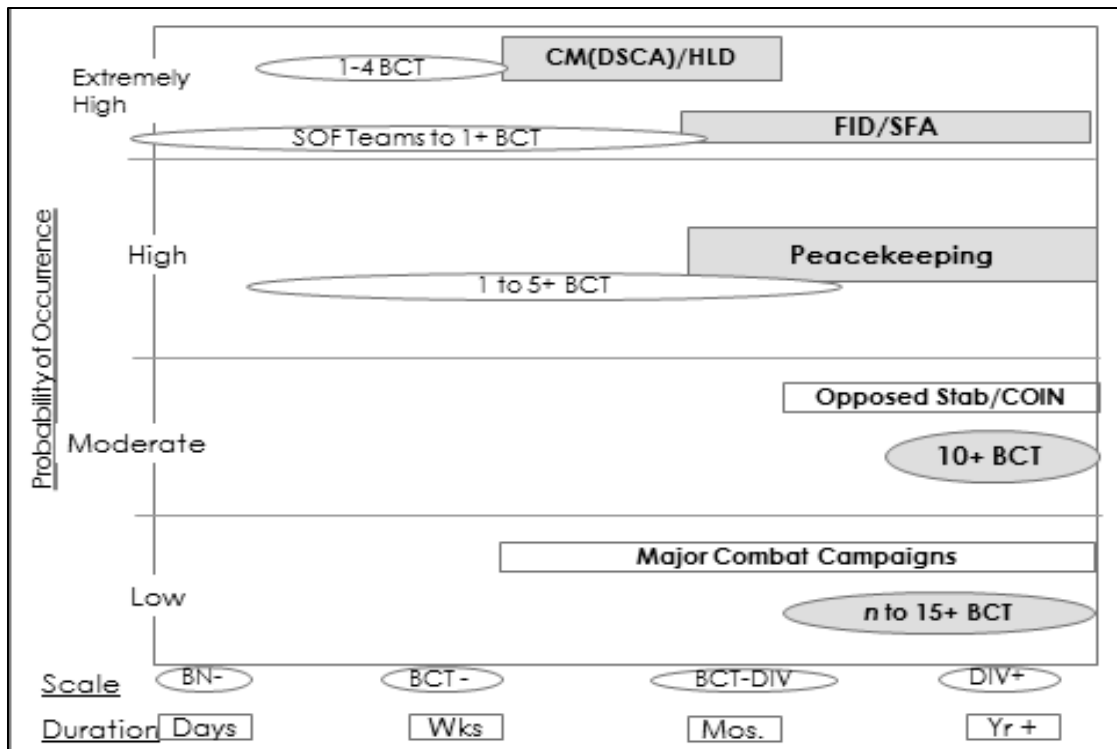


Figure 1: Potential Operations Requiring ARNG BCT Contributions

The potential operations may then be overlaid onto a depiction of the contemporary security posture in order to identify when ARNG BCTs may be called upon to provide forces (see Figure 2). Security Force Assistance, peacekeeping operations and DSCA or HLD may be long-term steady state shaping and deterrence activities that may require ARNG BCT participation. Long-term opposed stability operations (as conducted this past decade) and major combat operations may require mobilizing ARNG BCTs to provide follow-on forces or to deter potential aggression outside of active combat zones.

Most recently, the 2012 Department of Defense Strategic Guidance (DSG) clearly downplayed future U.S. involvement in operations typical of the past decade, stating the U.S. military will “no longer be sized to conduct large-scale prolonged stability operations.”⁴⁷ The DSG emphasized the importance of building partner capacity

through training exercises and rotational deployments. However, the strategic guidance also stated that should conflict erupt, the military must be able to “secure territory and populations...on a small scale for a limited period using standing forces, and if necessary, for an extended period with mobilized forces.”⁴⁸ While the new strategic guidance does not abandon the possibility of the need for extended stability operations in the future, it does represent a clear shift away from the emphasis given stability operations since 2005.

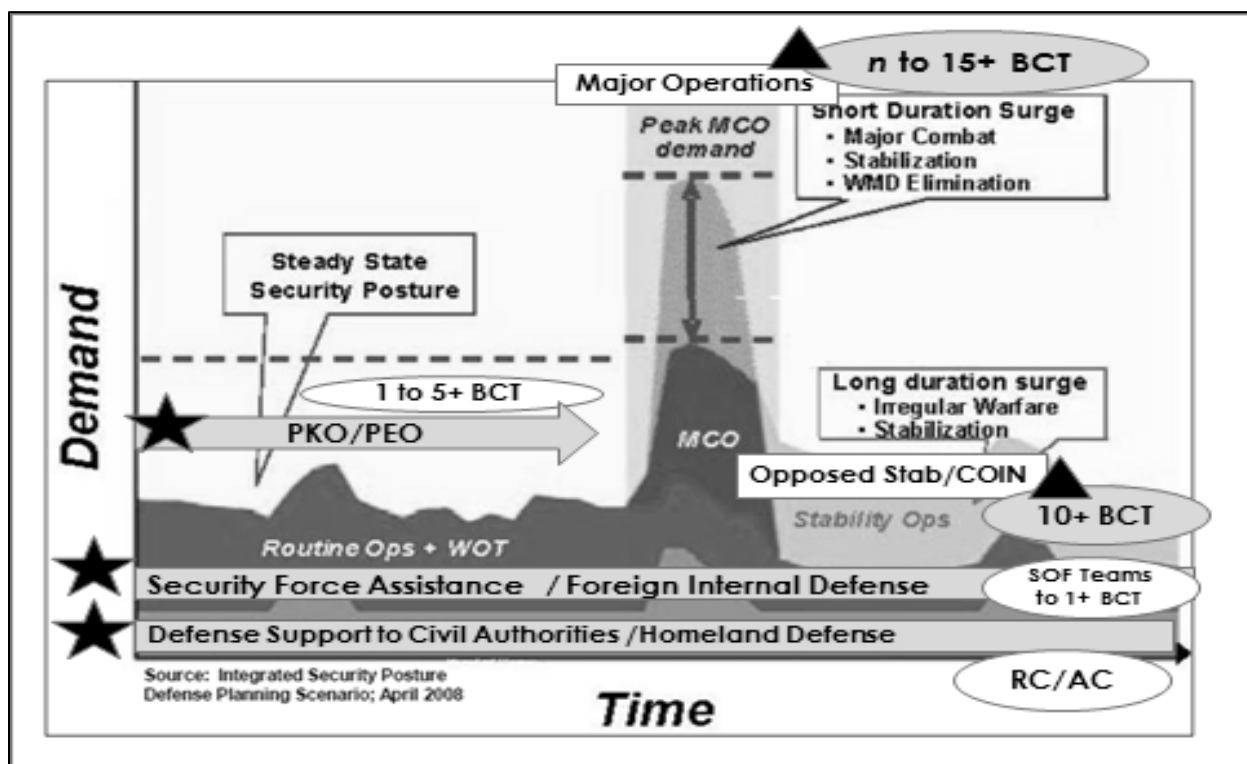


Figure 2: ARNG BCT Employment in the Contemporary Security Posture

The ARNG will be expected to contribute to the Army’s support of a Joint Force that is growing smaller but will need to retain sufficient agility and flexibility to deal with diverse defense needs.⁴⁹ The ARNG BCTs must continue to rotate through the Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) model in order to maintain the current high levels of readiness lest the investments of the last decade be squandered.

The Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) Model

The Army established the ARFORGEN model to provide rotational forces by means of cycling Army Operating Forces through a progression of readiness of three force pools.⁵⁰ The ARNG expects its units to spend one year in the RESET Force Pool, three years in the Train/Ready Force Pool (TR1, TR2 and TR3), and then be employed upon entry into the Available Force Pool. An ARNG unit with a Deployment Expeditionary Force (DEF) mission is slated for an operational deployment such as Operation Enduring Freedom and focuses its train/ready time on preparing for that particular operational mission. An ARNG unit with a Contingency Expeditionary Force (CEF) mission is expected to train and achieve proficiency in unified land operations by its Available year. CEF units may be designated to support theater security cooperation events, homeland defense activities, or if necessary, transition into a DEF as a surge force for operational missions.⁵¹

The ARNG BCTs methodically increase their readiness during the Train/Ready years in order to meet required the required readiness goals by their Available year. The current ARNG goal is to provide five BCTs in the Available Force Pool every year (barring any required surge) through Fiscal Year (FY) 2014. ARNG forces could be deployed every fifth year if required (a one to four mobilization to dwell ratio).⁵² Current ARNG planning seeks decrease its supply of BCTs to four each year by FY15. The mobilization frequency will drop to once every six years as well (a one to five mobilization to dwell ratio).⁵³ Under this model, the ARNG still will provide rotational units as part of the operational force to support the nation's defense efforts.

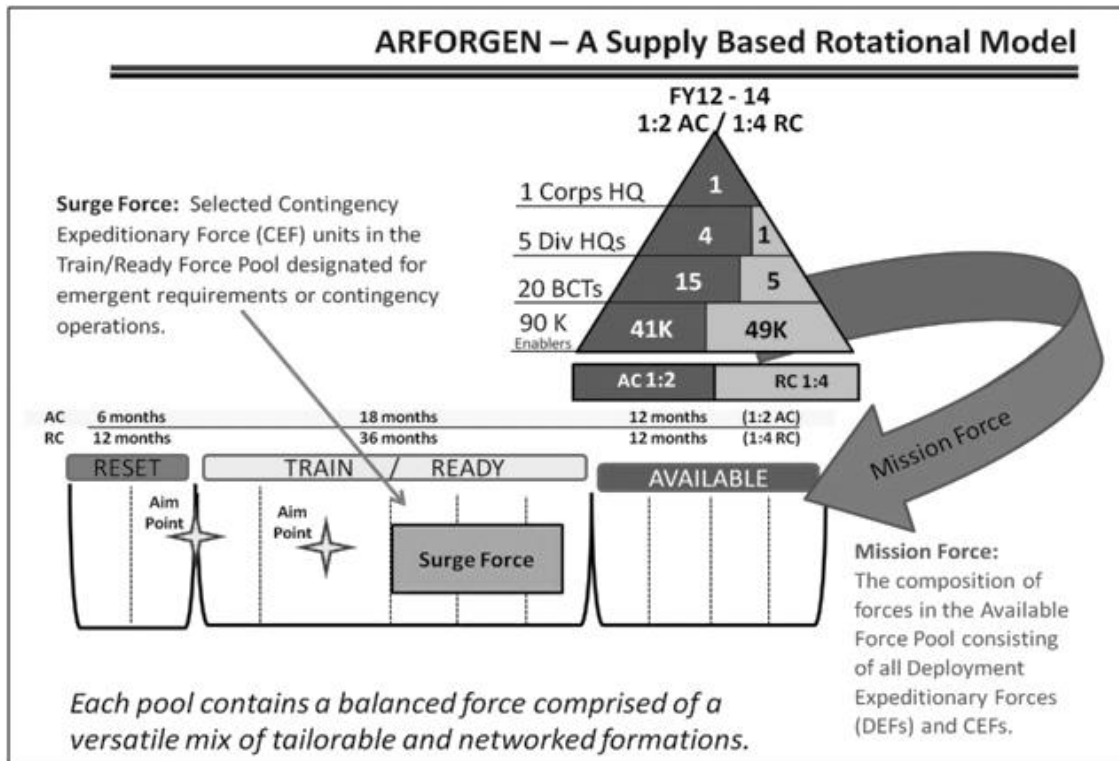


Figure 3: The Current Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) Model⁵⁴

Historically, ARNG soldiers trained 39 days per year. Under the more recent ARFORGEN training models and “Train- Mobilize-Deploy” concept, ARNG units now conduct additional training in the years leading up to their Available Year in order to meet required readiness rates. The ARNG CEF Execution Strategy plans for all BCTs to train an additional eight days during their TR2 Year and an additional 15 to 21 days in their TR3 Year to achieve company level proficiency in maneuver tasks prior to mobilization.⁵⁵ BCTs would then conduct 30 to 45 days of pre-deployment training to achieve staff proficiency at the battalion and brigade level and company level maneuver and live fire proficiency.⁵⁶

This timeline may be a bit ambitious in its estimation of the post-mobilization time required. In the spring and summer of 2010, the 2nd BCT, 34th Infantry Division, Iowa Army National Guard required approximately 77 pre- and post-mobilization training days

in order to prepare for its nine month deployment to partner with and train Afghan National Security Forces. Pre-mobilization training required a 21 day annual training period using the ARNG's exportable combat training capability (XCTC) in June, 2010, followed soon thereafter by the brigade's mobilization. Once mobilized, the 2nd BCT trained for 35 days at Camp Shelby Mississippi and 21 days at the National Training Center, for a total of 56 days of post-mobilization training, and ultimate deployment to theater by November 2010.⁵⁷ However, the experience of the 2nd BCT does validate the Army's years-long efforts in better preparing ARNG BCTs through the ARFORGEN cycle as compared to *Operation Desert Storm* brigade mobilizations which required more than 90 days.

Recommendations in Employing the ARNG BCTs

The recently released Defense Strategic Guidance noted the contributions of the Reserve Component over the last ten years of conflict. It also recognized that the appropriate force mix and Reserve Component readiness of the future will be based on the anticipated tempo of operations in the next decade.⁵⁸ But if it is time to "rebuild readiness in areas deemphasized over the past decade" (such as heavy BCT proficiency in combined arms operations) and avoid a "wholesale divestment of the capability to conduct any mission" (represented by the lessons learned in Iraq and Afghanistan) then perhaps the ARNG can influence how its BCTs can contribute to those goals.⁵⁹

Regular programmed utilization of the ARNG within the ARFORGEN cycle will be critical in sustaining ARNG BCT readiness. As operations continue to decrease in Afghanistan, ARNG BCTs will benefit through continued programmed mobilizations for

training missions with international partners, participation in rotations as forward deployed forces or training at one of the Army's Combat Training Centers. The *National Defense Authorization Act of 2012* assures access to the RC, enabling the Army to involuntarily order no more than 60,000 RC members at any one time to active duty outside of times of war or national emergency for no more than 365 consecutive days.⁶⁰

The ARNG must ensure that its 28 BCTs can meet the nation's defense needs. A workable solution is possible that would maintain strategic depth and provide the operational forces necessary to contribute to the nation's future security efforts while sustaining high levels of readiness. For the purposes of this recommendation, it is assumed that the ARNG will move to a one to five mobilization to dwell ratio (with units available ever six years) by 2015.

Recommendations for Maintaining Strategic Depth

Deterring and defeating aggression is a primary mission of the Joint Force. The ARNG will contribute to this effort due to its increased readiness and availability. The current Defense Strategic Guidance (DSG) envisions the ability of the Joint Force to simultaneously conduct large scale operations in one region even as it deters or defeats aggression in another.⁶¹ The ARNGs contribution to this effort should be the designation of its seven heavy brigade combat teams (HBCTs) as a strategic surge force.

In the last decade, the Army National Guard's HBCTs deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq in large part as motorized infantry forces or less often as mixed elements comprised of some heavy forces. Tapped for recurring deployments and cross leveling of soldiers to other units, HBCTs found it difficult to conduct combined arms maneuver

and precision gunnery training using their heavy systems as they prepared for overseas deployment. The recent CSIS report noted that the “demand for armored maneuver capabilities”⁶² will increase due to the flexibility of armored forces to operate across the range of military operations. Heavy forces using combined arms maneuver contributed significantly to the defeat of both irregular and hybrid forces as witnessed by Israel’s experiences during both the 2006 Second Lebanon War against Hezbollah and its actions in 2008 against Hamas in Gaza.⁶³ In Afghanistan, U.S. Marines and the Danish and Canadian Armies effectively used tanks to support infantry forces during counterinsurgency operations.⁶⁴

Furthermore, the status of the AC HBCTs is changing with the recent transition of two Active Component HBCTs to Stryker Brigades and the pending inactivation of two European based U.S. heavy brigades.⁶⁵ These changes come at a time when our NATO allies of France and the United Kingdom are cutting back on their armored forces due to economic challenges and shifting strategic priorities.⁶⁶ The Army and the ARNG must retain the HBCTs while committing to their employment as they are equipped to ensure the nation maintains the strategic depth and conventional force superiority necessary to meet future security challenges.

Key to the HCBTs designation as a strategic surge force is their deployment as organized, equipped and trained for combined arms maneuver and precision gunnery rather than as ad hoc infantry units executing stability operations. The ARNG is at a point due to reduced operational demands where it has the opportunity to deploy the forces most appropriately organized for such missions. This drop in demand for forces

provides the opportunity for the ARNG HBCTs to refocus on their traditional wartime missions of combined arms operations.

Under this recommendation, the ARNG HBCTs will still process through the ARFORGEN cycle to achieve platoon level tactical proficiency and battalion and brigade level staff proficiency on relevant major mission essential tasks by their Available (sixth) year. ARNG HBCTs would require an additional seven training days in TR2 and 14 additional days in TR3 and TR4 (see Figure 4). The ARNG HBCTs would be brought on active duty orders in their Available (6th) Year for roughly 60 days to conduct a combat training center (CTC) rotation to achieve company level maneuver and gunnery proficiency. The ARNG HBCTs would remain under U.S. Forces Command (FORSCOM) for training readiness oversight.⁶⁷

The ARNG cannot afford a return to the era of low training readiness in its combat brigades. Some might contend that designating the ARNG HBCTs as any type of strategic force would mean nothing more than labeling them as a “strategic reserve” with low readiness and capability levels. The additional recommended training days and National Guard Bureau (NGB) plans to meet programmed points of readiness within the ARFORGEN cycle counter this argument.

Recommendations for Providing Operational Capabilities

The ARNG will need forces that are flexible in meeting any number of future contingencies to promote stability and deter aggression worldwide. As such, the 21 infantry-centric BCTs (20 Infantry BCTs and lone Stryker BCT) in the ARNG will provide the bulk of the general purpose forces needed for more routine operational needs across the range of military operations.

The Army should consider regional alignment for selected ARNG IBCTs to facilitate training readiness and regional orientation. Under the future ARFORGEN cycle of one year mobilized to five years dwell time, the ARNG can provide three to four infantry BCTs entering their Available year each year. A potential example follows:

- Six IBCTs (1 per year) would be oriented on the Middle East given the nation's intent to "place a premium on U.S. and allied military presence in – and support of – partner nations" in the region.⁶⁸
- Six IBCTs (1 per year) would be oriented towards Asia to reflect the nation's need to "rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific Region"⁶⁹ and support the Army's efforts to build stronger ties to key allies and partners in the region.
- The remaining nine BCTs would be oriented on Europe, Africa or Central and South America.

Regionally oriented brigades would be aligned with the appropriate Army Service Component Command (such as U.S. Army Central or U.S. Army Pacific) or with a Corps or Division tasked with the same regional orientation. The *Comprehensive Review* recommended the Army further examine "establishing habitual relationships between Guard... [units] and individual Combatant Commands or other...Service components"⁷⁰ that might foster increased proficiency in operational capabilities.

The IBCTs would be incorporated into the Combatant Commander's war plans. The AC unit with which the ARNG IBCT is affiliated would provide training readiness oversight regarding the appropriate mission essential tasks on which the IBCT trains during its ARFORGEN cycle. These tasks may range from stability and

counterinsurgency operations to more conventional combat operations. The precedent for such an arrangement existed previously with the Army's CAPSTONE program of the late 1970s to the early 1990s in which ARNG units were primarily focused on the reinforcement and defense of Europe.⁷¹ IBCTs could benefit by routinely working with the same Active Component organization to build a "level of trust, cohesion and common understanding."⁷²

The ARNG IBCTs could also provide forces for steady state engagement activities including security force assistance training and multinational and multicomponent training exercises.⁷³ These efforts would complement any ARNG State Partnership Program currently in place. The IBCT's geographical focus would enhance regional specific cultural and language skills that would enhance their overall utility. If needed, ARNG IBCTs could support nonstandard stability operations units such as foreign military and police training teams, Agribusiness Development Teams, and Provincial Reconstruction Teams from within its BCTs.⁷⁴

The IBCTs would be available for rotational presence missions as suggested by the *Reimer Report*, the *Comprehensive Review*, and John Nagl and Travis Sharp. Assistant Secretary of the Army Thomas Lamont recommended that ARNG BCTs or subordinate battalions rotate to Korea or Europe.⁷⁵ Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta suggested rotating combat brigades to Europe in order to maintain a U.S. presence after two forward based brigades are inactivated.⁷⁶ The *Comprehensive Review* cited that potential cost savings could be realized by the Army if ARNG brigades were incorporated into a rotational cycle with AC BCTs for such missions, although further study would be required.⁷⁷

The IBCTs would train throughout the ARFORGEN cycle to reach company level proficiency entering their Available (sixth) Year (See Figure 4). This would require seven additional training days in their TR2 Year, 14 additional training days in their TR3 Year, and 21 additional days in their TR4 Year. Upon mobilization, these IBCTs would conduct 30 to 45 days of pre-deployment training at a CTC in anticipation of deployment, participation in training exercises or contributing to security force assistance missions. Dependent upon their anticipated mission the number of days trained each year and the size of the force required to deploy may be modified.

	RESET	TR1	TR2	TR3	TR4	Avail. Yr.
HBCT (7) (1-2/Yr)	39 days Individual/Crew Squad Tasks	39 days Individual/Crew Squad Tasks	39 + 7 days Crew Gunnery (Simulation) Crew & Platoon Maneuver (Simulation & LTX) BCT CPX	39 + 14 days Crew Live Fire Gunnery Platoon Maneuver STX Company Maneuver (Simulation)	39 + 14 days Crew Live Fire Gunnery Platoon Maneuver (STX) Company Maneuver (Simulation) BCT WFX CPX	~60 days CTC Platoon Gunnery Company Maneuver BN/BDE Staff Proficiency
S/IBCT Regional (21) (3-4/Yr)	39 days Individual/Crew Squad Tasks	39 days Individual/Crew Squad Tasks BCT CPX	39+7 days Squad & Platoon Maneuver (Simulation & LTX)	39 + 14 days Platoon Maneuver STX Company Maneuver (Simulation) BDE WFX CPX	39 + 21 days XCTC Platoon & Company Maneuver BN/BDE Staff Proficiency	CEF Mission 30-45 Day CTC Pre-Deployment Validation Deployment

Figure 4: Templated ARNG BCT ARFORGEN Training Timeline

Conclusion

The Army National Guard's transition from a purely strategic force to being part of the operational force resulted from the tremendous demand for ground forces needed to address the nation's defense needs in Iraq and Afghanistan. The ARNG will certainly continue to contribute as part of the operational force to meet the Army's future needs.

The 28 ARNG BCTs, appropriately focused and trained via the ARFORGEN cycle, can support the nation's needs for both operational flexibility and strategic depth while avoiding a reversion to the low levels of readiness typical of the Cold War era.

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